



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk (860)441-6640
Town Manager
(860)441-6630

Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Heather Sherman Bond, Kathryn M. Brown-Tracy, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Rita M. Schmidt, Paulann H. Sheets, and James L. Streeter

Tuesday, January 13, 2009

7:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Watson called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bond, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnyan.

3. Calendar and Communications

Councilor Kolnaski received a call from Jennifer Sims and they would like to continue the Board of Education/Town Council/RTM Liaison Committee. The next meeting will be held on January 21st.

Councilor Sheets received the Southeastern Connecticut Water Authority Executive Board agenda and meeting materials for January 15th.

Town Manager Oefinger received a telephone call from a Pfizer representative about pending separations. Pfizer is eliminating up to 800 positions internationally, 500 of which are in Groton in research and development. The layoffs will happen by the end of this month and are not attributed to the economic downturn, but to the company's reorganization and redirection of initiatives.

4. Approval of Minutes

2009-0018 Approval of Minutes (Committee of the Whole)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council Committee of the Whole meetings of November 25, 2008; December 1, 2008; December 2, 2008; December 6, 2008; December 9, 2008; and December 10, 2008 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, to adopt.

The motion carried unanimously

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

6. NEW BUSINESS

2008-0308 Supplemental Agreement for Revised Engineering Costs for the Mystic Streetscape Project

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger explained that this supplemental agreement adjusts the amount of money to be spent on engineering, but does not increase the total cost of the project or the Town's share. This is an internal adjustment required by the Department of Transportation. Councilor Sheets

noted that the delay in the project resulted in an escalation of costs. She asked if the components that were eliminated could be added back in for additional funding and the Mayor noted that this project has been identified with the Governor as "shovel-ready" in case of an economic stimulus package from the federal government.

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Streeter, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2006-0279

Developer Fees

Discussed

The Town Manager noted that the Town will be updating the survey of fees in other towns, and he is looking for any additional direction from the Town Council.

Councilor O'Beirne asked for an identification of the pros and cons of this type of fee versus using an escrow account. The Town Manager stated that there are legal issues that need to be examined to utilize an escrow account, but first the Town Council needs to identify the policy - does the Town want developers to pay for every direct and indirect cost of an application? The Town Manager described the Town's historical philosophy regarding land use fees. Councilor Bond asked if different fees can be charged based on the type of development. The Town Manager noted the time spent on an application is disproportionate to its size. Although exact time spent has not been recorded, there are good estimates available. If the intent is to have the department funded through fees, there will be a huge increase that will have the greatest impact on the individual or small business. Councilor O'Beirne suggested that escrow accounts would be used for large, complex applications.

The consensus of the Council was to have the Town Manager do an analysis of two completed projects to determine actual costs including staff time. Councilor Sheets noted two criteria: costs of review and if they are covered by the fees; and the policy, which can encourage or discourage development. She noted that the proposed land use regulation revisions encourage incentives to accomplish an overall plan for the Town. Councilor Sheets asked the Town Manager to consider whether fees could be used as incentives within the framework of the revised land use regulations.

2007-0304

Review of Financial Incentive Policy

Discussed

Councilors were asked to review the policy and make any suggestions. Councilor O'Beirne likes the policy as written. Councilor Monteiro feels the policy needs to be reviewed because it does not address the problems encountered last time the policy was used. She feels that the policy and how it is applied need to be defined better. Councilor O'Beirne asked Councilors to suggest specific changes to be reviewed by the Council. It was decided that the existing policy will be redistributed and placed on the next Committee of the Whole agenda.

2008-0026

Policy Concerning Disposition of Foreclosed Properties

Recommended for a Resolution

Councilor Monteiro read a suggested resolution concerning disposition of foreclosed properties for consideration by the Council. Town Manager Oefinger recommended eliminating "including but not limited to purchase, gifting, trade or acquisition resulting" and "other procedures." If any of those things occur, there is a specific purpose already identified unlike foreclosure where no determination has been made. Councilor Sheets noted that the policy is directed toward foreclosure and the other situations are addressed by the Charter. Councilor O'Beirne questioned Councilor Monteiro's concern about the ability of the Council and RTM to block the sale of a property. She clarified that she is concerned that if a property can be sold for taxes, and the purpose is to collect on taxes, it would not accomplish anything to hold up the sale. Councilor Sheets cited an example of not having such a policy and she feels that this policy will notify the Town Council when land is acquired through forfeiture. Discussion followed on identifying how

land is acquired in the policy and specific wording.

A motion was made by Councilor Monteiro, seconded by Councilor Sheets, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Sheets, to amend the motion to eliminate the wording as recommended by the Town Manager.

The motion to amend passed by the following vote:

In favor: 8 - Councilor Bond, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Sheets, Councilor Streeter and Mayor Watson

Opposed: 1 - Councilor O'Beirne.

The motion carried unanimously

2008-0235

Mortimer Wright Preserve Trail Proposal

Discussed

The Town Manager noted receipt of communications from both the Planning Commission and Inland Wetlands Agency that are generally supportive of the proposal with some recommendations. The Town Manager stated that the best way to lay out the trail is to have Town staff work with Dr. French in the field and put it on paper. If the Council supports the project, it would be appropriate to pass a resolution supporting this proposal subject to land use approvals. Councilor Sheets suggested that the resolution also endorse the recommendations of the Planning Commission and Inland Wetlands Agency.

Mayor Watson asked that the paint ball course issue be addressed. Councilor Streeter asked about the cost to the Town. The Town Manager noted that Dr. French asked for assistance at the trailhead, but the Town Manager does not believe there will be any out of pocket expense to the Town. He will report back to the Council with an estimate of machinery and staff time.

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Bond, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2009-0019

FYE 2010 Budget

Discussed

Mayor Watson asked the Council to consider the following items:

- *Meeting with Groton Long Point on January 27th to discuss budget*
- *Meetings with department heads*
- *Meeting with the Board of Education*
- *Pre-budget public hearing*

Councilor Sheets noted that the RTM is doing a preliminary budget review and planning to meet with department heads. She expressed concern with staff time being taken up. The Town Manager explained that an ad hoc budget committee was established by the RTM. The meetings between department heads and RTM committees are designed to bring everyone up to speed on what is going on in the department. The RTM has a very short time frame for budget review and it can be difficult to see the big picture. The Ad Hoc Committee felt that more time should be spent up front looking at the overall budget. Councilor Sheets asked if the RTM could attend the Town Council sessions. The Town Manager suggested that the purpose for the department head meetings will be different for the two groups. The Town Manager has no concerns with department heads attending both sets of meetings.

The Town Council concurred with inviting Groton Long Point to the special meeting with the City of Groton on January 27th to discuss the budget.

The Town Manager explained that the department head budget submittals to the Town Manager on January 14th will be level service budgets. The Town Manager has reviewed alternate scenarios with all of the department heads. At upcoming meetings, the Town Manager will be in a position to review the various department scenarios with the Council for information purposes. The Town Manager expressed concern that when department reviews are segregated, the Council is not looking at the overall picture. He noted that cuts will not be borne equally by departments. The Town Manager explained that the alternatives will be talking points, not actual budget submittals. The consensus of the Council was to meet with department heads, starting on January 20th at 6:00 p.m.

Mayor Watson asked the Council if they would like to meet with the Board of Education. Councilor O'Beirne noted that the Board of Education's public hearing is Thursday at 6:00 p.m. at Northeast Academy.

The consensus of the Council was to conduct a pre-budget public hearing.

2009-0011 Joint Meeting with City of Groton (2009 Standing Referral)

Discussed

There will be a joint meeting with the City of Groton on January 27th.

2009-0015 Town Clerk Compensation

Discussed

Mayor Watson stated that the Town Clerk's compensation is reviewed at the start of the calendar year. He distributed a packet of information from the Town Clerk for future discussion.

2008-0168 Town Manager Annual Evaluation

Discussed

Mayor Watson noted that the Town Manager is evaluated July 1st. Town Manager Oefinger distributed a packet of information to the Council. Councilors were asked to submit completed evaluations to the Mayor for compilation. This item will be added to the agenda for the January 20th special meeting of the Committee of the Whole.

7. Consideration of Committee Referral Items as per Town Council Referral List

None.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Sheets, to adjourn the meeting at 8:26 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.